

OPINION



GENDER equality remains an elusive dream or ideal yet for this country. It was revealed this week that despite its noble intentions and pronouncements, some pertinent government policies and legislations are far from being women-friendly.

Where the country has succeeded in achieving some degree of equality among the sexes, the outcome and benefits have been outstanding personal accomplishment and positive contributions to families, corporations and the country.

It is a proven fact that gender equality in all areas of nation-building is certain to bring out the best of every citizen. Our journey to reaching that ideal will be shortened if gender equality is achieved.

Women deserve respect, equality

The Papua New Guinea Vision 2050, in more ways than one, depends largely on achieving such equality and it can be sure to make great strides in economic growth and improve our social standing indicators.

Critics may argue that PNG women are better than their sisters in similar situations in other parts of the world, however there much work still needed. One has only to sit in this week's women's forum to appreciate the challenges women face. A few of those challenges like the ones facing indigenous businesses are common among women as well as men.

In countries where women have been given all possible opportunities to stand shoulder to shoulder with

men, there have been great strides in economic and social advancement. One such country is the United States of America, whose embassy in Port Moresby this week co-hosted the PNG Women's Forum during which a number of important matters affecting women in general and specific aspirations have been discussed.

The Women's Forum was told of some outstanding government commitments as well as omissions or oversights in the formulation of legal and policy framework for the advancement of the womenfolk. The Government's much talked about small to medium enterprises policy received some criticism because it did not adequately address women entrepreneurs' issues. Instead

women were lumped together with youth and people with disabilities in the policy. In another session of the forum an official from the Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Committee (CIMC) told the forum that gender equality was in fact marginalising women in the country.

She reckons there is no coordinated effort specifically for women, with central agencies doing their own thing and there was nothing tied up in the budget.

If the Government is serious about addressing gender equality and gender-based violence, it should provide support in terms of allocating funds in the annual budgets and provide capacity and incentives for them, the official said. Meanwhile,

at the University of Natural Resources and Environment Vudal campus in East New Britain female students have been told that the institution will not entertain pregnancies. The warning was sounded by the acting registrar of the university who urged all female students to be extra careful and to make use of the counselling service available at the student support service or clinic.

Some sound advice from the university official: Do not waste your time here. Always balance your mental, spiritual and physical activities in order to live a healthy life. The female students were advised to stay away from negative influences and remain focused on their studies. The university registrar is echoing an age

old policy of most academic institutions in the country which unfairly disadvantages girls who fall pregnant by their male friends who are able to complete their studies without any disruption in most instances.

Many young women have suffered the indignity of being expelled from their studies due to pregnancy. And where their institute of learning takes a hard stand against students falling pregnant, they are given very little opportunity to continue and complete their studies, such policies need to be revisited or made fairer on both parties involved.

Gender equality should not only be preached in institutions of higher learning but practiced so that future husbands, colleagues, bosses or subordinates of women are made to learn to respect and appreciate women as equals.

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VERY soon motorists who commute through the Waigani traffic lights will need little boats to be ferried across as the potholes increase in size and depth by the day. Seriously, that part of the road needs to be completely dug up, backfilled and resealed and this time with cement instead of tar.

WE hope city hall does not process any contractor payments for patching that area and other potholes elsewhere in the city as it is being filled with just soil. After a heavy downpour, the very holes miraculously reappear again.

WE should all try this. Former US President Harry Truman had a rule: Any letters written in anger had to sit on his desk for 24 hours before they could be mailed. If at the end of that "cooling off" period, he still felt the same sentiments, he would send the letter. By the end of his life, Truman's unmailed letters filled a large desk drawer. How often in this age of immediate communication would even 24 minutes of wise restraint spare us embarrassment!

COTTON candy, now that rings a bell. It was popular during the 1980s when we'd visit Lae showground and it was a treat having one. It is a kid-pleasing treat that is often sold at fairs, circus shows, and other jovial events. It is usually tinted pink, though purple and blue are popular colours. It is made by machines with a central bowl where sugar is melted and spun out through a myriad of tiny holes where it solidifies and is caught by a ring.

TORQUATO Tasso, an Italian poet, was one of the foremost writers of the Renaissance as well as one of its tragic figures. After penning many popular works, Tasso became psychologically unstable and was intermittently confined to a hospital in his later life. He is best known for writing - *Jerusalem Delivered* - an epic of chivalric exploits during the First Crusade. Considered his masterpiece, it has influenced countless poets.

ON the morning of March 11, 2004, 10 explosions occurred aboard four commuter trains in Madrid, Spain. The series of coordinated bombings killed 191 people and wounded 2,050, making it the deadliest terrorist attack in Spain's history. Although a Basque militant group was originally suspected of the attack, an investigation revealed that it was carried out by an al-Qaeda-inspired terrorist cell.

QUOTE of the day: Death is the only physician, the shadow of his valley the only journeying that will cure us of age and the gathering fatigue of years. - George Eliot (1819-1880)

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Daesh deals blow to history of mankind

DUBAI: The war against the obscurantist Daesh (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) is a war between backwardness and civilisation in every sense of the word. And it is only too clear that all those affiliated with this organisation are against life and humanity; their thoughts are 14 centuries behind time.

In its wars, we find that Daesh targets its opponents, cuts off supply lines, kills prisoners of war, and goes further by seizing property and destroying cultural and civilisational landmarks of occupied cities.

Cultural features, arts and literature give life a wonderfully distinguished and elegant flavour, which eases life's severity and prevents us from turning into mere tools of industrial

production. When a city's theatres, cinema houses, antiquity sites, public libraries, museums, and religious landmarks are destroyed, then the city is considered to be facing a war targeting its culture and identity.

In truth, such a war will destroy a city's existence.

Daesh has always been keen on documenting its barbaric tactics of chopping heads, burning people alive, and killing and burying scores of people in mass graves. This is documented in a method similar to a Hollywood production of suspense thrillers. This is done intentionally, to plant fear and panic in the hearts of people.

Daesh has come up with a new video, in addition to its other highly offensive productions,

showing its militants destroying statues and other antiquities at the Mosul museum - the second biggest museum in Iraq that houses antiquities that go back to the 9th century BC - with huge hammers.

The cultural and antiquity sites destroyed by Daesh do not belong to Iraq alone, rather they belong to all humanity because of their links to important eras in history.

Hence, it is not surprising that international agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) were shocked by the Daesh video, which prompted them to call for a special Security Council session to come up with a resolution for the protection of antiquities

against theft and destruction.

Daesh has been keen on committing crimes against culture and heritage in a systematic manner since invading Mosul on June 10, 2014.

It destroyed dozens of mosques, churches, shrines, statues of poets, musicians and part of the Nineveh wall, apart from burning documents and manuscripts.

Daesh has not reaped any financial gains from destroying ancient artefacts, as the terrorists were unable to move them due to their size and weight.

Smaller antiquities are considered by these terrorists to be the spoils of war, and thus good to sell. While big statues are taboo and the works of infidels! - Gulf News